

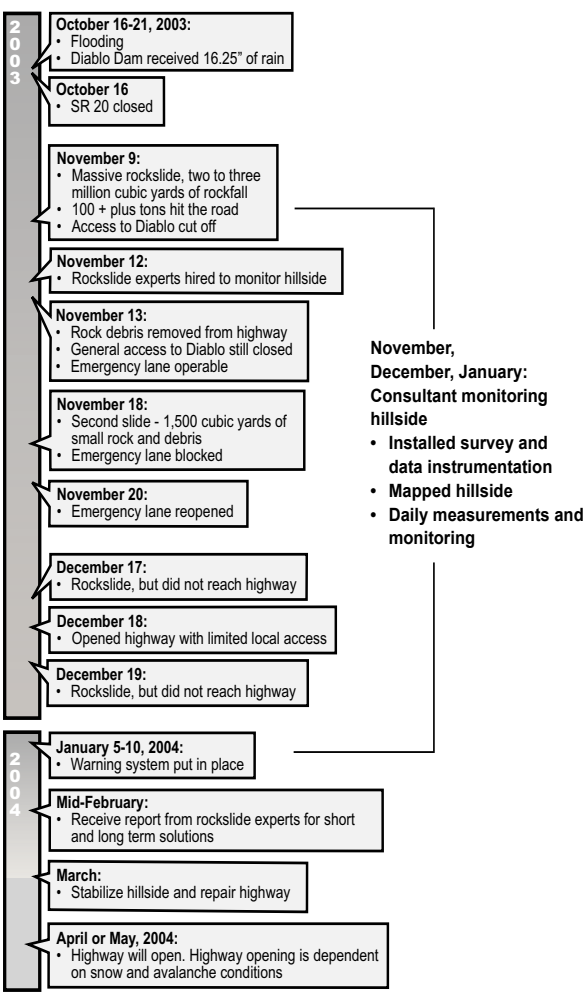
compiling the data from the hillside. Once enough data is gathered and rock movement trends can be assessed, we can determine how to properly fix the hillside and highway. A decision is expected in mid-February. Research must be completed before crews can begin stabilization and repair work. Using the wrong approach could result in massive highway damage and prevent us from reopening the highway to traffic.

What are the next steps?

- URS, the contractor monitoring and collecting data from the hillside, will have enough data to submit a report to WSDOT in mid-February. This report will include recommendations for short- and long-term solutions for the unstable hillside.
- WSDOT and other government agencies involved will then carefully review the recommendations and set a course of action to stabilize the hillside. Work to stabilize the hillside will begin in late-february, weather permitting.
- As soon as the hillside is stable, WSDOT’s contractor will repair the damaged highway below the slide area, finish the repairs at Pyramid Creek and open the highway to traffic.

How much will it cost to stabilize the hillside and repair rockslide damage?

There’s no way to know until we can gather enough data and develop a solution.



Where can I get information about WSDOT’s progress and the pass opening?

www.wsdot.wa.gov/northcascades

Dustin Terpening
Public Information Officer
TerpeniD@wsdot.wa.gov
360.757.5997

John Hayes
Project Manager
HayesJ@wsdot.wa.gov
360.757.5983



State Route 20

North Cascades Highway Closure and Rockslide



Afternoon Creek

The North Cascades Highway closed for the winter season on October 17, 2003. The highway routinely closes in mid-November due to winter ice and snow. The highway closed earlier than usual due to a record-breaking rainstorm and resulting mudslide and flood damage and remains closed due to winter snow and ice. Travel on the section of the highway between Newhalem and Diablo remains strictly restricted due to rockslide damage and extraordinary rockslide threats. Despite winter weather, Washington State Department of Transportation crews and rockslide experts are working towards a full reopening of the highway by spring, when we plan to have the highway open and safe for motorists again. WSDOT recognizes the economic importance of this highway and is making every effort to address the extraordinary damage caused by recent storms.

What are the current North Cascades Highway closures, restrictions and conditions?

Routine winter closure

Thirty-six miles of the North Cascades Highway, from milepost 134, eight miles east of Diablo Dam, to milepost 170, fourteen miles west of Mazama, are closed for winter. This section of highway includes 4,855 foot Rainy Pass and 5,477 foot Washington Pass and is home to rugged winter weather and avalanches. This section of highway is annually closed for the winter.

Between Newhalem and Diablo

Roughly six miles of the North Cascades Highway, between Newhalem and Diablo, from milepost 120 to 126, is open on a strictly limited basis. Due to extreme rockslide danger, access is restricted to Diablo residents and authorized Seattle City Light, National Parks Service and WSDOT personnel, only when weather and hillside permit, and allowed only during daylight hours, currently between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Other areas damaged by storms

WSDOT crews repaired much of the other October rainstorm damage before severe winter weather arrived. Crews made remarkable progress repairing creeks and the highway at Pyramid and Thornton Creeks, which sustained the most damage during the October flooding. At Varden Creek, by December 4, 2003 crews removed tons of rocks, trees and mud from the highway and returned the once-flooding creek to it's original bed. In the spring crews will install new guardrail and repave the highway to finish repair work.



100 plus tons of rock on the highway below Falls Creek.

When will the highway reopen to traffic?

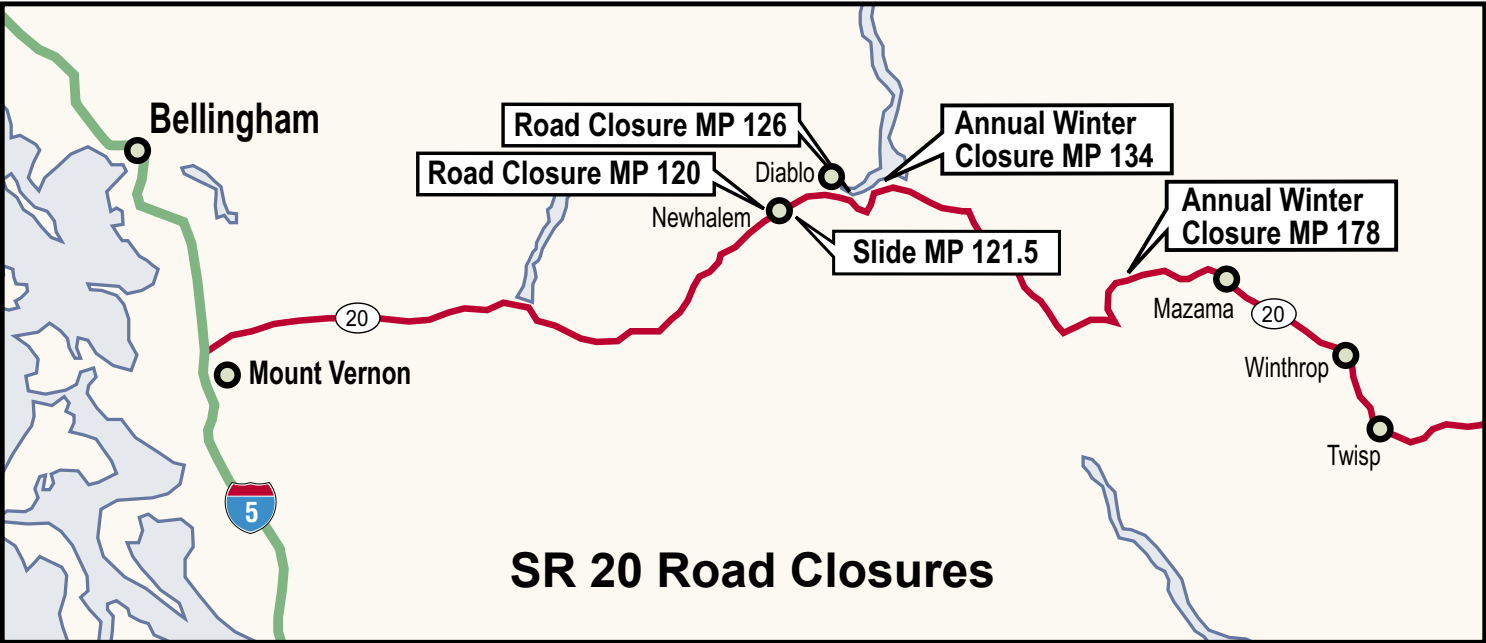
The Washington State Department of Transportation will open the North Cascades Highway this spring as usual, barring unforeseen conditions and more surprises from Mother Nature. As always, WSDOT will make every reasonable measure to get the highway safely open as quickly as possible in the spring. The highway can only be safely opened after severe winter weather threats subside and WSDOT crews can clear the highway and minimize avalanche threats. During the past twenty-two years the highway usually opened in April.

In past years, the highway opened as early as March 22 and as late as June 14. Opening date history can be found on WSDOT's Web site at www.wsdot.wa.gov/northcascades/closures.htm.

In addition to snow and ice, this year massive rockslides threaten the highway between Newhalem and Diablo. WSDOT is working with rockslide experts to stabilize the hillside, repair the highway and open the highway in the spring. While this situation is extraordinary and conditions could change, this effort is not expected to delay the spring highway opening.



Falls Creek, Afternoon Creek, and State Route 20.



What problems must WSDOT fix before the highway can open?

Before we can safely reopen the highway, we must:

- finish repair work at Pyramid Creek, where flooding washed away a section of the highway
- stabilize an unstable hillside with rock poised to fall on the highway and repair damaged sections of highway between Newhalem and Diablo caused by the November 9 rockslide
- remove winter snow and ice from the highway and address avalanche threats when spring weather arrives

When will WSDOT announce the opening date?

As usual, WSDOT will know and announce the opening date of the highway two or three weeks in advance. Weather and snow conditions determine the opening date. As soon as avalanche danger has been reduced and snow can be removed from the highway we will open the highway. The opening date is announced via news media outreach and WSDOT's Web site www.wsdot.wa.gov/northcascades

What is WSDOT doing about the massive rockslide between Newhalem and Diablo?

On November 9, 2003 a massive rockslide slammed into the North Cascades Highway between Newhalem and Diablo, near Afternoon Creek and Falls Creek, removing parts of the highway and guardrail. Enormous boulders and debris in excess of 100 tons, including a 50-ton boulder bigger than a house, were left on the highway. WSDOT engineering geologists and the Federal Highway Administration both attribute the massive rockslide to record October rainfall. Since then more slides damaged the highway in this area. Some of these slides are so large they registered on earthquake monitoring equipment.

Doing our homework first: monitoring, assessing, and finding the correct solution

WSDOT is using all available technology to assess and monitor conditions on the mountain. Geologists and surveyors rock-climbed and dropped from helicopters to install a series of survey prisms on the slope of the mountain. These markers allow us to watch and monitor mountainside movement. We are also using state-of-the-art electronic devices borrowed from the United State Geological Survey to monitor movement. Rockslide experts are collecting and